



# > LEARNER IN DIFFICULTY

## Part A *Diagnosing the Learner in Difficulty*

### > Learning Objectives

*By the end of the session, learners will:*

1. List common signs of a learner in difficulty
2. Identify causal factors that influence a learner in difficulty
3. Diagnose a learner in difficulty from a case study and recommend relevant strategies to support this learner

### > Time: 60 minutes (1 hour)

### > Overview:

This is the first workshop in the Learner in Difficulty module. This session focuses on identifying learners in difficulty from common symptoms and diagnosing causal factors that may be influencing their struggles. Miriam Lacasse’s Educational Diagnosis Wheel is introduced used to diagnose typical case studies.

*Key ideas for this workshop include:*

1. While definitions of “in difficulty” may differ, statistics suggest that it is likely that most preceptors will work with a learner who is experiencing significant challenges to success at some point
2. There are many factors that can influence a learner’s difficulties, including learner issues (both academic and personal), teacher issues, and training environment issues
3. Speaking with the learner is a good first step to help distinguish the true causes of their difficulties and involve them in creating an intervention plan

### > Materials:

- Facilitator Guide
- PowerPoint File
- Lacasse Educational Diagnosis Wheel Resource [1 per participant]
- Learner in Difficulty Case Studies [1 per group of 3-4 participants]
- Session Evaluation Forms [1 per participant]

## > Agenda:

TIME	TOPIC	DELIVERY FORMAT
5 minutes	Introductions and Session Orientation	<i>Interactive Lecture</i>
10 minutes	What is a “Learner in Difficulty”?	Q&A
15 minutes	Factors Affecting Learners in Difficulty	<i>Interactive Lecture</i>
25 minutes	Diagnosing a Learner in Difficulty (Case Study)	<i>Small Group Activity</i>
5 minutes	Wrap up and Session Evaluation	Q&A
<b>60 minutes total</b>		

## > Pre-Session Preparation:





### *When you receive this module:*





1. Read through this guide to familiarize yourself with the learning objectives, general structure, and key ideas for this learning session.
  - Make notes for yourself that will help the session go smoothly
  - What are the key messages for learners to take away?
  - Where do you anticipate learners may challenge ideas or struggle with concepts presented in this module?
2. Preview the associated PowerPoint file on the computer you will be using to deliver the session to test system compatibility and to give yourself a chance to see how information will be delivered
  - In some cases, you may need to download free, web-based software to allow your system to play any embedded video files – just follow the prompts that arise when previewing or consult a tech-savvy colleague for assistance
3. Assemble the required materials for the session.
  - Print out all documents needed to run the session (see the Required Materials list above)

### *On the day of the session:*

1. Prepare the learning environment to best suit this module.
  - Consider the physical layout of the space as well as optimal seating arrangements in relation to the activities to be completed during the session.
    - Will this session run best with learners arranged as individuals, in pairs, or in groups?
    - Where will you mainly locate yourself to facilitate the group?
2. Write the following on an easily visible surface in the room:
  - The title and learning outcomes for the session
  - The agenda for the session
3. Open the PowerPoint file and have the first slide projecting as learners enter the room.

## > SESSION PROCEDURE

TIME	DIRECTIONS	PPT SLIDE
Pre-session reminders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Do you have all facilitation and learner materials needed for the session?</i></li> <li>• <i>Are the session title and agenda written somewhere clearly visible to learners?</i></li> <li>• <i>Is your PowerPoint slide show loaded and currently showing the first slide?</i></li> </ul>	 1
5 minutes	<p><b>INTRODUCTIONS + SESSION ORIENTATION</b> [Interactive Lecture]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Ask</b> learners to introduce themselves, including their name and whether they have ever worked with a learner that they would consider to be “in difficulty”</li> <li>2. [Show Slide 2 – <b>Session Objectives</b>] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Review</b> the session topic and learning outcomes</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. <b>Inform</b> learners that the approach that will be taken in this module is to examine learners in difficulty with a similar eye to how we examine patients with health issues – seeking a clear diagnosis before deciding on a treatment plan.</li> </ol>	 1  2
10 minutes	<p><b>WHAT is a ‘LEARNER IN DIFFICULTY’?</b> [Interactive PowerPoint]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. [Show Slide 3 – <b>How to identify a Learner in Difficulty</b>]</li> <li>2. <b>Ask</b> learners to identify signs or symptoms that they’ve observed in learners that suggest that he or she is struggling</li> <li>3. <b>Facilitate</b> a brief discussion using the following question prompts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Do most learners experience ups and downs of mood or performance during their Residency?</i>  <b>Draw out:</b> yes, most learners go through periods of struggle or low mood at some point during Residency</li> <li>• <i>What distinguishes a learner in a typical “down” period from a “learner in difficulty”?</i>  <b>Draw out:</b> a learner is considered “in difficulty” if... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ the period of difficulty is prolonged (ie. observed over multiple days or weeks, not a single incident)</li> <li>▶ the effects are compromising patient care</li> <li>▶ the effects are jeopardizing the learner’s likelihood of successfully completing the rotation or learning event</li> <li>▶ the learner expresses a desire to quit the program or harm themselves</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ol>	 3

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. [Show Slide 4 – <b>Learner in Difficulty: a definition</b>] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Review</b> the definition and provide a example to illustrate the second point (ie. a learner may be meeting expectations of the preceptor and the educational program but may not be meeting his/her own unreasonable self-expectations and therefore be considered to be “in difficulty”)</li> </ul> </li> <li>5. [Show Slide 5 – <b>The Stats</b>] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Review</b> the statistics on Learners in Difficulty</li> <li>• <b>Ask</b> learners whether these statistics are consistent with their experience teaching Residents</li> </ul> </li> <li>6. [Show Slide 6 – <b>The Facts</b>] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Briefly <b>review</b> these points</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	 4   5   6
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>15</b> minutes</p>	<p><b>FACTORS INFLUENCING LEARNERS in DIFFICULTY</b> [Interactive Lecture]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Inform</b> learners that, similar to patient care, successfully addressing a learner in difficulty issue depends on accurate diagnosis of what is causing the issue.</li> <li>2. <b>Ask</b> learners, “<i>What are some of the reasons why learners struggle?</i>” and facilitate a brief sharing session on this topic</li> <li>3. <b>Distribute</b> Miriam Lacasse’s Educational Diagnosis Wheel and Educational Management Tool. Briefly cover the following points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>There are many factors that may be influencing a learning difficulty</i></li> <li>• <i>Some of these include deficits in the Knowledge, Skills, or Attitudes of the learner (represented on the central yellow section of the wheel)</i></li> <li>• <i>Other factors include Learner Life Issues, Teacher Issues, and Training Environment Issues (represented on the outer 3 section of the wheel)</i></li> <li>• <i>Using this model helps to uncover <u>all</u> of the contributing factors to a learner in difficulty situation, so that each can be targeted with an intervention</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>4. <b>Ask</b> participants if there are any other factors that are not represented on Lacasse’s Wheel that might be additional factors in a learner struggling</li> </ol>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>25</b> minutes</p>	<p><b>DIAGNOSING a LEARNER in DIFFICULTY</b> [Small Group Activity]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. [Show Slide 7 – <b>Small Group Activity Questions</b>]</li> <li>2. <b>Arrange</b> learners into groups of 3-4, assign each a case number, and ask each group to discuss their case and be prepared to answer the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Based on the information presented in each case study, what factors may be contributing to this learner’s difficulties?</i></li> </ul> </li> </ol>	 7

- *If you were the Preceptor, what specific questions would you ask the learner to determine whether your diagnosis was correct?*
- *If correct with your diagnosis, what steps would you follow next to attempt to address this issue?*

3. If groups finish early, **ask** them to read and discuss another case study

4. **Reassemble** as a large group and ask small groups to report out

5. **Facilitate** brief discussions to see whether there is agreement between groups on the diagnosis and recommended treatment plan

**Draw out:**

- ▶ **Case 1:** Potential contributing factors:
  - *Underdeveloped skill dimension: Patient-centered care*
  - *Cultural adjustment issues/isolation (IMG)*
  - *Inexperienced preceptor*
  - *Resident attitude*
  - *Poor communication skills*
- ▶ **Case 2:** Potential contributing factors:
  - *Underdeveloped skill dimension: Selectivity*
  - *Family responsibilities (new parent)*
  - *Complex patient issues*
  - *Weak organizational skills*
- ▶ **Case 3:** Potential contributing factors:
  - *Underdeveloped skill dimensions: Communication – active listening / Professionalism – attendance availability*
  - *Training environment issues (inadequate support for too many learners or inconsistent teaching)*
  - *Self-esteem*
  - *Mental health issues*
- ▶ **Case 4:** Potential contributing factors:
  - *Underdeveloped skill dimension: clinical reasoning skills*
  - *Lack of fundamental and clinical knowledge*
  - *Overwhelming workload*
  - *Learning disability*
  - *Weak organizational skills*

6. **Summarize** the activity by asking what key ideas participants took away

**Draw out:**

- ▶ There may be different interpretations of a situation
- ▶ Multiple causes may be in play for a learner in difficulty
- ▶ Speaking with the learner is a good first step to help distinguish the true causes of their difficulties and involve them in creating an intervention plan

7. If time permits, **ask** participants if anyone has a real case example of a learner in difficulty that they would like to share with the group in order to get the group's ideas on what factors may be contributing to the situation

# 5

minutes

## WRAP-UP [Q&A, Activity]

1. [Show Slide 8 – Session Objectives]
  - **Refer** learners to session learning outcomes and use questioning to review desired responses to Objectives #1&2
2. [Show Slide 9 – References]
  - **Ask** learners, "What is one useful idea you are taking from this session that will help you diagnose a learner in difficulty?"
  - **Facilitate** a few responses from the group
  - **Encourage** learners to try using these approaches with any learners in difficulty they encounter
  - **Refer** learners to Miriam Lacasse's book that extrapolates on the Educational Diagnosis Wheel and provides a number of other practical and evidence-based tools for assessing and addressing learners in difficulty.
3. **Inform** learners that we'd like to collect some feedback from everyone regarding the session they just attended. Some of this feedback will inform us of our effectiveness in delivering the session.
4. **Distribute** Session Evaluation forms and ask them to write some anonymous feedback directed towards the session facilitator and learning module designers
5. **Thank** learners for attending and participating in the session



## OPTIONAL MODULE IDEAS:

1. If time is short, **review** one case study as a large group to reduce reporting out time

## > Assessment:

### *Formal*

- Small group reports (ie. how many groups effectively diagnosed the learner in difficulty and recommended appropriate strategies to address the situation?)
- Responses on Session Evaluation Forms

### *Informal*

- Responses received during Q&A and Wrap-up sections